

OrdnanceReports

News updates from around the world



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This publication is produced by the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps Communications Coordinator. The purpose of this publication is to provide Command Information materiel concerning world events and the U.S. military's role in those events. Ordnance specific events will be covered if appropriate. Direct your correspondence to Ed Starnes at 410-278-2415 (DSN 298-2415), or email edward.starnes@ocs.apg.army.mil.

Nation pays tribute to those who died to defend freedom

by Jim Garamone, American Forces Press Service

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY, Va., May 26, 2003 - "God is crying too," said 4-year-old Robert as he and his family participated in the Memorial Day ceremonies here today.

Robert, whose family did not want to use his last name, was one of thousands who sat through the rain to honor the men and women who have died in defense of the United States. He and those gathered listened as President Bush spoke for the nation in tribute to the fallen.

"We come to this Memorial Day with deep awareness of recent loss and recent courage," Bush said during his speech.

The president spoke of Americans who fought for freedom throughout U.S. history. "Today we honor the men and women who wore the nation's uniform and were last seen on duty," Bush said, "from the battles of Iraq and Afghanistan to the conflicts of Korea and Vietnam, to the trials of world wars and the struggles that made us a nation.

"Today we recall that liberty is always the achievement of courage. And today, we remember all who have died, all who are still missing and all who mourn."

He said that in every generation, the United States has found people who were equal to the needs of the times. The farms, small towns and city streets of this land have always produced free citizens who assumed the discipline and duty of military life," he said. "And time



President George W. Bush joins Military District of Washington commander Army Maj. Gen. James T. Jackson and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, along with other officials, family members and guests, in a solemn salute as a bugler renders "Taps" during Memorial Day wreath-laying ceremony May 26 at Arlington National Cemetery. "Today we honor the men and women who wore the nation's uniform and were last seen on duty," Bush said in a speech in the cemetery's Memorial Amphitheater after the ceremony. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample, USA

after time, they have proved that the moral force of democracy is mightier than the will and cunning of any tyrant."

Bush said that American service members have not fought for glory, but to fulfill a duty. "They did not yearn to be heroes. They yearned to see Mom and Dad again and to hold their sweethearts and to watch their sons and daughters grow," he said. "They wanted the

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Nation pays tribute to those who died to defend freedom continued

daily miracle of freedom in America, yet they gave all that up and gave life itself for the sake of others.

“Their sacrifice was great, but not in vain,” he continued. “All Americans and every free nation on earth can trace their liberty to the white markers of places like Arlington National Cemetery. And may God keep us ever grateful.”

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld introduced the president. He said that the graves that surround the Memorial Amphitheater contain “the heroes of our heritage.”

He said the cemetery contains their monuments, but it also contains their dreams. He referred to “their dreams for America that it would remain a bastion of freedom and a beacon of hope; dreams for the world that men would learn to live in harmony and in peace; and their dreams for themselves, their families and their futures — dreams they did not live to see come true.”

Both Bush and Rumsfeld stressed the obligations that go along with service members’ sacrifices. “Today we face new threats,” Rumsfeld said. “They will be met with the same courage, the same commitment, and like the foes of times past, they too will be defeated.

“This is our pledge to the men and women who have gone before,” the secretary declared. “It is our responsibility to our children and their children and all who follow.”

BELOW: Jake Jacobsen, Fallbrook, Calif.; Don Bridges, Lake Elsonier, Calif.; Wylie Wilson, Spring, Texas; and Don Morris, Phoenix, Ariz., render salutes May 24 at a wreath-laying ceremony for Rolling Thunder’s 16th annual Run for the Wall at Arlington (Va.) National Cemetery. Photo by Gerry J. Gilmore



Members of the Armed Forces Honor Guard team position the colors during the Memorial Day observance May 26 at Arlington National Cemetery. Along with the U.S. flag is each military service’s flag. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample, USA



Iraq remains dangerous; security operations continue

by Gerry J. Gilmore, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, May 27, 2003 - Several U.S. troops were killed by hostile action or accidents in Iraq over the past few days as U.S., coalition and Iraqi operations to enhance law and order in that Middle East country continued.

Two U.S. Army soldiers were killed and nine injured during a May 27 firefight with hostile forces near Fallujah, according to a U.S. Central Command press release. The release noted the aggressors attacked the American troops with rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire from a mosque, which is a violation of the law of war.

The U.S. soldiers' response killed two enemy troops, according to the release, while six were captured.

CENTCOM also reported that another soldier drowned May 26 after diving into an aqueduct located south of the Iraqi town of Kirkuk.

Also on May 26, the command reported that one American soldier was killed and three injured when a Humvee apparently ran over a land mine or unexploded ordnance. In a separate incident on the same day, CENTCOM reported that a collision between a U.S. forces' Humvee and a tractor-trailer killed one American soldier and injured two.

In addition, a U.S. military convoy was attacked May 26 near Hadithah, about 120 miles northwest of Baghdad, according to Central Command. One American soldier was killed and another was wounded during the attack, a command release stated, during which the enemy employed rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns.

CENTCOM also reported that one American soldier was killed and another injured May 25 in southern Iraq during an apparently accidental explosion at an Iraqi ammo dump. The American troops were pulling guard duty at the facility at the time of the incident, according to a press release.

The killed and injured soldiers' names were being withheld pending notification of next of kin.

Meanwhile, CENTCOM noted that U.S. and coalition operations to improve security throughout Iraq continue. Coalition forces are actively conducting patrols to eliminate crimes against people and property, weapons sales, explosives and black market goods such as fuel, a command release stated.

For example, CENTCOM reported that U.S. soldiers from the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment shut down an automobile "chop shop" during a May 26 raid in Baghdad. And 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, soldiers seized two Fedayeen paramilitary leaders during a recent raid near Bayji.

The command also reported that U.S. Marines from the 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, recently captured two Iraqis wanted by the coalition during a cordon and search operation.

And United Kingdom troops reportedly broke up an Iraqi family feud recently, according to a CENTCOM release. The U.K. forces detained two Iraqis and seized several AK-47 automatic weapons.

And the command also reported that coalition forces are continuing

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CENTCOM's Gen. Franks plans to retire

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, May 23, 2003 - "Gen. (Tommy) Franks has advised me of his desire to step down as the commander of the U.S. Central Command in the weeks immediately ahead and his intention to retire from active duty later this summer."

With these words in a written statement, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld announced that the architect of the stunning victory in Operation Iraqi Freedom would leave his position and the Army.

"He has served our country with great distinction," said Rumsfeld. "I consider myself privileged to have worked so closely with him over these many months."

His request for retirement must still be approved, said DoD officials.

Franks, 57, has been CENTCOM commander since June 2000. The command has responsibility for much of Central Asia, the Middle East and portions of Africa. The general has commanded the coalition actions in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

Franks, from Midland, Texas, was commissioned a second lieutenant

in 1967 via Field Artillery Officer Candidate School, Fort Sill, Okla. He served with the 9th Infantry Division, Republic of Vietnam, as a forward observer for the 2nd Battalion, 4th Field Artillery.

His other combat assignment was as assistant division commander (maneuver), 1st Cavalry Division during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990-1991.

In 1969, he was selected to participate in the Army's Boot Strap Degree Completion Program, and subsequently attended the University of Texas at Arlington, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration in 1971.

Franks served in numerous posts in Germany, Korea, Oklahoma, Texas and the Washington, D.C., area.

His awards include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal; Distinguished Service Medal (two awards); Legion of Merit (four awards); Bronze Star Medal with "V" (three awards); Purple Heart (three awards); Air Medal with "V"; Army Commendation Medal with "V"; and a number of U.S. and foreign service awards. He wears the Army General Staff Identification Badge and the Aircraft Crewmember's Badge.

Military vets motorcycle to Arlington Cemetery

by Gerry J. Gilmore, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, May 24, 2003 – Arlington National Cemetery is a quiet place where military veterans lie in peace among slim, white marble tombstones that in the springtime array like troops in formation across the rolling fields of green.

Today, however, the staccato thunder of legions of motorcycle exhausts echoed across these normally placid environs, as an army of leather- and denim-clad veterans rolled in on their Harleys, Hondas, Kawasakis and BMWs.



From left, "Fireman" Ric, Darryn Mewhorter, Gene Beasley, Gail Ferrell, Michelle Barbour, Mike Barbour and Keith Parker pose May 24 at Arlington (Va.) National Cemetery. All are members of the Southern Cruisers motorcycle club out of Raleigh, N.C. Photo by Gerry J. Gilmore

"Rolling Thunder" had indeed arrived at the cemetery, a stone's throw across the Potomac River from the nation's capital.

The non-profit group — accompanied by thousands of other motorcyclists from across the country — biked to Arlington to participate in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

Rolling Thunder member Bill Newby, 56, a disabled Navy Vietnam veteran from Knoxville, Tenn., noted that the organization was making its 16th annual trek to Washington.

He explained that Rolling Thunder uses motorcycles to publicize the prisoner of war/missing in action issue and to educate the public. He added that the group "is also committed to helping disabled veterans from all wars."

Newby considers the POW-MIA issue a personal one, noting, "I've got friends who've not only died, I've got friends who haven't been accounted for."

In fact, the organization's annual Run for the Wall, Newby pointed out, features thousands of motorcyclist-veterans from Rolling Thunder — and other motorcycle clubs across the nation — who motor to Washington regularly to visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and to take part in other activities to raise public consciousness about the POW-MIA issue.

Most biking veterans at Arlington — including Newby — were festooned with military awards earned in previous wars. Now graying and a step or two slower than in their prime, they remain fiercely patriotic — and approving of the war against global terrorism.

Newby, for one, emphasized that "we ought to do it and get it over with ... and not pull back," regarding U.S. and coalition military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq to defeat global terrorism.

To Gail Ferrell, a member of the Southern Cruisers motorcycle club out of Raleigh, N.C., this year's ride to Washington "symbolizes freedom and what we're fighting for — and all the men and women that have died for our country."

America's service men and women "are doing a wonderful job" in the war on terror, she asserted, adding, "they're fighting for us and we should stand up for them and do whatever we can to help them."

Keith Parker, another Southern Cruisers member, from Willow Spring, N.C., said he was heartened by the successful rescue of Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch and fellow soldiers formerly held as POWs during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Anytime we have any of our soldiers captured or taken into custody like that ... we need to go get them," Parker, another Navy Vietnam veteran, noted. The rescue of Lynch and comrades was "a heroic thing for Americans to do and it's heroic for (the former POWs) to survive it and come out."

And concerning the war against terrorism, Parker asserted, "Let's go get them ... everywhere."

However, "we've got a long ways to go," Parker acknowledged, noting there are "a lot of (people) in the world who'd like to destroy us — for our freedoms."

Those responsible for the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, Parker said, were wrong in thinking such an assault would sap Americans' resolve to confront terrorism.

"We're going to make sure they don't go it again," he concluded.

www.goarmy.com

Couple travels across U.S. to show support for troops

by Denise Brown, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 23, 2003 -The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks prompted Americans nationwide to convey their patriotism by displaying American flags on their cars and vans. One patriotic Arizona couple went above and beyond the call of duty, and their vehicles now rate more than a mere passing glance.

Instead of a bumper sticker or two, every square inch of Ed and Tonie Negrin's pickup trucks and sport utility vehicle display their pride in America's leaders and men and women in uniform. Obscuring the original paint scheme, the images depict the American flag, the president and troops from each service branch.

Since late 2001, the Negrins, who own and operate a courier business, have taken their vehicles on the road. They dubbed their vehicles "America's Truck Display" and began touring the United States visiting military installations to remind troops how much they're appreciated for their day-to-day contributions to ensure the nation's security.

"We meet people who don't earn a lot at what they do, but what they do is very important," Negrin said of the military. "We want them to know we appreciate it. I wouldn't be able to do any of the things I do, if I didn't live in a society like this, if I didn't have people willing to defend and protect my freedoms."

Driving their red, white and blue, stars and stripes decorated-pickup truck, they embarked on a 38-day, 12,000-mile journey that took them to 39 states. Throughout the trip, the couple gave away patriotic mementos they had purchased with their vacation savings.

"We had been saving for three years to take a first-class vacation to Europe," said Negrin, noting that the couple's 10th wedding anniversary fell shortly after Sept. 11, 2001. "But, we just didn't feel comfortable with it after 9-11, so we took all that money and bought all kinds of flags, patriotic gear, books on American history and books on the U.S. military and such, and just set out across the country. We spent 38 days traveling the U.S. from one end to the other."

On their first trip, while staying at a motel, they met Army Sgt. Maj. Tony Rose, who was attending a military conference there. Rose

Iraq remains dangerous; security operations continue continued

joint security patrols with Iraqi police, which improves security and provides valuable training for the Iraqi law enforcement officers.

Central Command reported that American and coalition security forces in Iraq had conducted 18 raids and more than 2,000 patrols during the past 24 hours, including 201 patrols with Iraqi police.

In fact, an Iraqi police patrol recently turned in seized weapons and money to 614th Military Police Company troops, according to CENTCOM. The U.S. MPs and the Iraqi police, the release noted, are co-manning a Baghdad police station.



Ed and Tonie Negrin's decorated sport utility vehicle, inspired by Operation Iraqi Freedom, was on display during an April 2003 visit to MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. This was the Negrins' second visit to the Florida headquarters for U.S. Central Command. Photo by Sgt. Barry Melton

was stationed in the Pentagon on Sept. 11, and was instrumental in saving the lives of coworkers following the terrorist attack.

Negrin realized one of the patriotic books they were giving away contained a reference to Rose for his brave efforts on that day.

"That was our first contact with folks in the military," Negrin explained. Impressed with the service people they met, they decided to focus future travel on visiting military bases to show their appreciation for those in uniform.

They want the troops to realize "Somebody cares, somebody really looks out for us," he said, "and that's truly what we want to convey — that we love those folks, we love what they do and we want to help them any way we can."

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DoD announces mishap reduction initiative

The DoD announced today that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has challenged the heads of the military departments and the defense agencies to reduce the number of mishaps and the mishap rates by 50 percent in the next two years. This action was taken as the mishap rates have recently increased and the secretary wants to reverse this trend.

“World-class organizations do not tolerate preventable accidents,” said Rumsfeld in a May 19 memo. “These goals are achievable, and will directly increase our operational readiness. We owe no less to the men and women who defend our nation.”

This direction applies to all DoD activities and includes military on and off-duty, active duty, as well as Reserve and National Guard forces, and all civilian employees. The reduction goal also applies to all operations of aircraft, weapons, ordnance, motor vehicles, maritime assets, and installations.

In fiscal 2002, 82 personnel died in aviation accidents. That is 17 more than the 65 aviation flight related deaths in fiscal 2001. Likewise, 63 aircraft were destroyed last year compared to 46 destroyed aircraft

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Couple travels across U.S. to show support for troops continued

Following their initial trip, the Negrins decided to decorate a second pickup truck saluting U.S. efforts in Operation Enduring Freedom. It was complete with images depicting U.S. military leaders, including the president, defense secretary, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and images of active duty troops. The Enduring Freedom truck is dedicated to people in all branches of the military, Negrin said.

Visiting 15 military installations in May 2002 and five last August, including the Pentagon, the Negrins gave away their patriotic mementos. “At each place we just set up tables like we did at the Pentagon and give away great books and flag,” he said. He described the experience as “just a blast - we met wonderful people.”

The couple recently added Operation Iraqi Freedom T-shirts to the mementos they give away. Negrin estimates he and his wife spend between \$8,000 and \$12,000 for each base they visit, budgeting between \$130,000 and \$140,000 for each overall trip. They set aside 20 percent of their gross business income for the project.

Negrin points out that they do not accept the donations people constantly want to give. “We’re just a couple trying to take a portion of our income and use it for something good to support people who really stand up for and support us,” he explained.

Last Christmas, the Negrins extended their generosity even further and opened their home to six military personnel for the holidays. He and his wife hosted three soldiers - veterans of duty in Afghanistan — two Navy recruits and a Marine at their home for dinner and a four-day holiday stay.

“It was great,” he said. “It was a blast for us because normally we don’t have a lot of folks in our house for Christmas, so it was just tremendous.”

Besides opening their home and hearts to service personnel away from their families during the holidays, they’ve also invited a young military family to visit.

“We just met this wonderful young couple,” Negrin said. The husband had been deployed to Afghanistan, returned home and shortly after his return, deployed again to support Operation Iraqi Freedom. Now, back home again, Negrin said, “they have to get to know each other all over again.”

This year’s trip to military installations began last month and included stops in Florida, Virginia and Maryland. The Negrins plan to visit Fort Bliss, Texas, over the Memorial Day weekend, and wrap up their current tour next week at the U.S. Marine Corps base at Twentynine Palms, Calif.

The 2003 America’s Truck Display features the couple’s newest vehicle, an SUV depicting U.S. efforts in Iraqi Freedom.

“We just plastered that truck full of those images,” Negrin said. One side of the truck features images of President Bush, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and U.S. Central Command chief Gen. Tommy Franks. The SUV’s other side features personnel representing every service branch.

Negrin said that many military personnel assigned to several bases they’ve recently visited were deployed in support of Iraqi Freedom. So instead, the couple had the opportunity to meet family members. He added that they received requests to return to the bases so that returning personnel would be able to see their vehicle.

Last month’s stop at U.S. Central Command headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., represents the Negrin’s second visit to the air base. “I’ve really gotten quite close to the folks at CENTCOM. It was Gen. Franks and his people who really encouraged us,” Negrin said.

“We have just been really blessed by the opportunities that have arisen from this and when I say that, I mean just meeting wonderful people we would have never met,” he said.

Negrin hopes that in the years ahead, the patriotic gifts they distribute will remind service men and women that “the majority of Americans love what they do, support what they do and appreciate what they do. It’s not really the value of the item so much,” he said, “as it is a token of how this country feels about them.”

Photos of the Negrins visit to U.S. Central Command in April can be viewed on CENTCOM’s [Iraqi Freedom Truck](#) photo gallery web site. The Negrins’ “America’s Truck” web site can be viewed at <http://www.americatruck.us/>.

Gold bars pique 173rd's interest at checkpoint

by Sandra Jontz, Stars and Stripes

KIRKUK, Iraq — U.S. soldiers seized \$80 million to \$100 million worth of crudely made, non-minted gold bars Sunday and detained three Iraqis heading east, possibly for the Iranian border, officials said Monday.

Soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, manning a routine checkpoint set up on the outskirts of Kirkuk, impounded the truck Sunday and detained the three occupants because the driver's paperwork and identification did not match the vehicle registration, according to Maj. Kevin Petit, executive officer of the brigade based in Vicenza, Italy.

"That was the probable cause," Petit said.

Inside the bed of the turquoise Mercedes dump truck were 999 bars of gold, each weighing about 22 pounds, said Maj. Josslyn Aberle, a spokeswoman for the Army's 4th Infantry Division, which oversees military operations in northern Iraq. The military based its estimate of value on the weight of the gold.

The three occupants, two Kurds and one Turkmen, told the arresting soldiers and later intelligence officers they had been paid \$300 cash to transport what they thought was melted down copper, Petit said. They still were in U.S. custody Monday afternoon for interrogations, he added.

The truck left Baghdad on Saturday and was on its way to As Sulaymaniya, near the border with Iran, he said. The soldiers stopped it Sunday about 10 a.m. at a checkpoint in the south side of town, which has been the site of previous checkpoints, he said.

For now, military leaders are leaning toward believing the three men's story because no weapons were found in the truck, the trio did not put up any resistance when the dump truck was stopped or impounded, and the gold bars were not concealed in any way, Petit said.

The gold will be analyzed to determine its purity and exact value, and then sent to the Central Iraqi Treasury, Aberle said.

A reservist assigned to the 173rd who works in a gold and jewelry shop in the civilian world told military officials that the find likely was 21-carat gold, Petit said.

The 173rd soldiers who stopped and seized the booty were on patrol Monday afternoon when officials briefed reporters and were unavailable for interviews.

Two days earlier, soldiers stopped another Mercedes dump truck on its way toward the Syrian border hauling a load of 2,000 gold bars that look very similar to the ones seized Monday, he said.

Officials can't say yet whether the two incidents are linked. "But they do look similar," Petit said.

None of the drivers had proper documentation and gold is not a



Maj. Robert Gowan, public affairs officer with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, amid 999 bars of gold on the bed of a truck that was stopped by soldiers of the 173rd at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Kirkuk, Iraq, on Sunday. Photo by Michael Abrams, Stars and Stripes.

natural resource in Iraq, making the transport of so many bars highly suspicious, Aberle said.

DoD announces mishap reduction initiative continued

in the previous year. These accident statistics do not include the 184 deaths due to the terrorist attack at the Pentagon. DoD updates these aviation rates on a daily basis and posts them at <http://www.denix.osd.mil/SOH-public/Accidents>.

Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness David S.C. Chu has been designated to lead the accident reduction effort. This is a concerted effort to engage all levels of DoD leadership in mishap prevention strategies and initiatives. Initiatives include: developing a real-time mishap decision support system; applying commercial technologies, where practical, on high-risk equipment such as aircraft; and finding ways to implement best practices from industry and other government agencies into DoD activities.

Firefight in Iraq kills 4, injures 9

by Bassem Mroue

FALLUJAH, Iraq (AP) - Gunmen opened fire on American troops at a checkpoint early Tuesday, killing two U.S. soldiers and wounding nine others in the troubled town of Fallujah - a hotbed of support for Saddam Hussein's fallen Baath Party, the U.S. military said.

U.S. troops returned fire, killing two attackers and capturing six Iraqis for questioning.

Hours later, two American military police officers were injured, at least one seriously, after two attacks with rocket-propelled grenades on a northwest Baghdad police station, said Lt. Clint Mundinger of the U.S. Army's 709th Military Police Battalion.

In the past three days, seven American soldiers have died in attacks or accidents in Iraq, but the American general commanding troops in Baghdad said Tuesday that security is improving in Iraq and that U.S. authorities are making progress on improving life for ordinary Iraqis.

The attack in Fallujah happened around midnight at a checkpoint in the town about 30 miles west of Baghdad.

Initial reports said the Americans were fired upon from many directions, including from a mosque, U.S. officials said. But townspeople said only two men fired shots and that the U.S. troops quickly killed them.

"Who knows what they were thinking when they engaged U.S. soldiers," said Maj. Randy Martin, a spokesman for the U.S. Army's V Corps. "I know we suffered casualties, and the enemy paid a price."

The U.S. soldiers killed or wounded were from the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, based in Fort Carson, Colo., Martin said. Their names were not released.

In other developments:

- Coalition forces over the weekend captured two regional Baath leaders, Sayf al-Din al-Mashadani and Sad Abd al-Majid al-Faysal, bringing to 27 the number of the top 55 former members of Saddam's regime in custody, Central Command said Tuesday.

- The military said it arrested Saddam's brother-in-law, Mulhana Hamood Abdul Jabar, early Sunday in the leader's hometown of Tikrit. He was not on the list of 55 wanted regime members.

- U.S. paratroopers impounded a truck Thursday in eastern Iraq with what appeared to be 999 bars of gold, worth an estimated \$100 million, a military spokeswoman said Tuesday. The men inside the truck claimed the bars were copper ingots.

The Fallujah attackers used rocket-propelled grenades and small arms in the attack, according to a statement from U.S. Central Command, but Martin said the grenade was thrown by hand.

Bashir Jasim, who lives in the area, said the two Iraqis stopped their pickup truck at a traffic checkpoint, stepped out and opened fire. They were killed immediately by the Americans, he said. Other townspeople gave similar accounts.

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U.S. Army Bradley Fighting Vehicles patrol in the streets of Fallujah, 30 miles west of Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday, May 27, 2003, hours after firefight left two U.S. soldiers and two unidentified attackers dead and nine other American troops injured. (AP Photo/Ali Haider)

Library of Congress holds tribute for Bob Hope

by Rudi Williams, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, May 23, 2003 – Several years ago, Comedienne Phyllis Diller asked Bob Hope, “Who would want to be 100 years old?” Bob answered, “Anyone who is 99.”

And in six more days, Bob Hope will become a centenarian. Among a slew of celebrations across the country, the Library of Congress held a reception and stage tribute to Hope on May 22. The event was a variety show that explored his life through song, dance and comedy.

Hosted by entertainer Dick Cavett and actor Boyd Gaines, the review featured vaudeville-type skits, dance routines, tap dancing, Broadway tunes, “Ziegfeld Follies” skits, and skits from radio, television and the musical “Red, Hot, and Blue.”

Hope’s performance in “Red, Hot, and Blue” opened the door to his first major feature film for Paramount Pictures, “The Big Broadcast of 1938.”

“The Bob Hope Review” was held in the library’s theater, not far from the Bob Hope Gallery of American Entertainment.

Cavett told the audience that five years ago, the Hope family gave the Library of Congress tons of material from Hope’s 80 years of show business, including more than 85,000 pages of Hope’s jokes. These comedic holdings have been typed, scanned, digitized and indexed by topic and subtopic. The gallery features a touch-screen kiosk where visitors can read them.

The library’s theater was packed with family, friends and well-wishers. One was Fayard Nicholas, 88, who has been friends with Bob Hope since they met in a show in 1936.



One of four beautifully decorated birthday cakes for guests at the Bob Hope tribute at the Library of Congress in Washington May 22. Photo by Rudi Williams

“I haven’t seen Bob for a while, but we still send each other birthday and Christmas cards,” said Nicholas, half of the famous dancing duo “Nicholas Brothers.” The other half was his late brother, Harold, who died in July 2000 at the age of 79.

“We appeared in the “Ziegfeld Follies’ on Broadway in 1936 and have been friends ever since,” Nicholas said. “Every time we see each other, we talk about the old times – like when we went to Vietnam in 1965 with the USO show. He’d say, it’s been a long time, hasn’t it?”

“I’d say, ‘Yes, we’ve been friends for a long time,’” said Nicholas, who lives in Toluca Lake, Calif., about five miles from where Hope and his wife Delores live. “He’s really a nice guy.”

Hope, who has befriended every president since Franklin Roosevelt, has received more than 2,000 birthday cards and thousands of e-mails.

The Library of Congress event was part of a yearlong celebration that started with 2003 New Year’s Day Rose Parade in Pasadena, Calif. It was there that directors of the Tournament of Roses established in perpetuity “The Bob Hope Humor Trophy.”

Then Super Bowl pre-game show later in January on ABCTV network paid a tribute. And that was just the beginning of tributes all over the country.

Bob’s reaction to all the attention, according to daughter Linda Hope: “He’s all smiles.” “As for us,” she continued, speaking for the family, “we are overwhelmed by the outpouring of love,

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The famous character sketch of Bob Hope graces the stage in the Library of Congress’ theater where a tribute to him was held in Washington May 22. Photo by Rudi Williams

National Guard transforming to ‘modern minutemen’

by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, May 22, 2003) — National Guard leaders from the 54 states and U.S. territories supported the chief of the National Guard Bureau’s initiative for transforming their organization into a force of “modern Minutemen that is more responsive for the American people” while meeting in Columbus, Ohio, on May 18.

The National Guard’s adjutants general reached consensus with the ideas put forward by Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum, the Guard Bureau’s new chief, to consolidate separate state headquarters for members of the Army and Air Guard into joint, or combined, headquarters.

Idaho Maj. Gen. John Kane said the National Guard generals agreed the time is ripe for change and that they support the requirements for the 21st century that Blum presented during the spring conference of the Adjutants General Association of the United States. Kane is the association’s president.

Blum has advocated transforming the command structures for the 460,000 members of the Army and Air Guard since becoming the Guard Bureau’s 25th chief on April 11.

He has emphasized that idea to members of Congress, to the national news media, and to many members of the National Guard. He has also insisted that the National Guard will retain its war-fighting capabilities.

“Homeland defense is the National Guard’s most important priority. Make no mistake about that. We have been performing that mission since 1636, and the American people expect no less of the National Guard during these trying times,” said the no-nonsense Blum about the war against global terrorism.

148,000 citizen-soldiers and airmen were serving in the United States and in 44 other countries, including Iraq and Afghanistan, on May’s third Sunday when he met with the adjutants general, Blum pointed out.

“We will continue to honor that commitment by transforming into a more efficient and accessible force,” he said. “We are not going to let turf and parochialism get in the way of doing what is right for America.

“We fight jointly, and we need to train and operate on a daily basis in a joint environment so we can make the transition [from citizen to soldier] very quickly. After all, our symbol is the Minuteman,” Blum told Pentagon reporters on May 16.

“We will be better understood by our active-duty counterparts. We will then be seen for what we are — reliable, ready, and accessible,” he predicted.

Blum has ordered the National Guard Bureau, which currently



Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, explains his vision for transforming the National Guard into a more efficient and accessible force at the nation’s adjutants general meeting in Columbus, Ohio, on May 18. (photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell)

consists of a joint staff and separate directorates for the Army and Air Guard, to become a joint headquarters by July 1 of this year. He has asked the states to establish joint headquarters, and do away with state area commands for Army Guard forces, by Oct. 1.

Lieutenant Gen. Roger Schultz, director of the Army Guard, and Lt. Gen. Daniel James III, director of the Air Guard, will serve as deputy chiefs of the Guard Bureau, Blum explained. The next vice chief of the Guard Bureau will become the chief of staff for the joint bureau, he added.

Blum is also urging the states to include members of other military components, including the Coast Guard, in their joint headquarters. He said he would do that at the Guard Bureau that is based in Arlington, Va.

“We will not fund state area commands by Oct. 1. We will fund joint headquarters,” Blum said in central Ohio. “The joint world is no longer a theory. It’s a reality.”

Indeed, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld addressed both issues on the same Armed Forces Day weekend that Blum took his vision for the National Guard’s transformation to Ohio.

“Joint and combined war-fighting is our path to the future,” said Rumsfeld during the May 16 opening ceremony for the Joint Services Open House at Andrews Air Force Base, Md. He was referring to the unprecedented manner in which the different services have worked closely together to conduct Operation Iraqi Freedom and the war against terrorists in Afghanistan.

“We are seeing signs of transformation all around us,” the defense

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National Guard transforming to 'modern minutemen' continued

secretary added. "We have to keep that up. The challenge is to maintain true jointness in war-fighting."

"The adjutants general accepted very favorably the things that Lt. Gen. Blum laid out for them," said Kane, the adjutant general for Idaho. "They are looking for a few more details, but, overall, his ideas were very well accepted."

Kane said they could meet the Oct. 1 deadline for reorganizing the state commands into joint headquarters.

"It will push us, but that's fine," Kane said. "Sometimes it's better to be pushed than to be pulled."

Major Gen. Robert G.F. Lee, who became Hawaii's adjutant general on Jan. 1, said he has already begun forming a joint National Guard headquarters in that state.

"I didn't know how far I could go with it. But Lt. Gen. Blum has made it clear I can make our headquarters as joint as I want to," he explained.

Lee, who commanded U.S. Army Reserve forces in the Pacific Command before becoming Hawaii's National Guard leader, predicted he could easily entice other reserve components to assign representatives to his state's headquarters.

Officials claim this transformation is as significant for the country's largest military reserve force as two are other chapters of National Guard history. One was the Militia Act of 1903, also called the Dick Act, that established federal guidelines for organizing, training and equipping the Guard in line with standards established for the regular Army. The second was the creation of the Air National Guard in 1947 that led to separate Army and Air Guard directorates.

The historic agreement among the National Guard's leaders occurred in a state steeped in history. Seven U.S. presidents have been born in Ohio. The Wright brothers lived in Ohio and became the first people to fly a powered aircraft 100 years ago this December. Ohio natives John Glenn Jr. and Neil Armstrong became, respectively, the first American to orbit the earth and the first person to set foot on the moon.

The adjutants general, 34 of whom belong to the Army Guard, hope that forming joint headquarters that are more in line with the active forces' will streamline the process for mobilizing Army Guard soldiers for federal duty.

They believe that citizen-soldiers who have already been processed and prepared at their home stations should not have to go through the same process at active Army mobilization stations before they are deployed.

"We don't need to be double checked and triple checked every time our troops get activated," Lee said.

The Air Guard routinely deploys troops from their home stations, it was pointed out.

The adjutants general also paid heed to Blum's proposals for improving the Guard's capabilities for defending the homeland.

Homeland defense, he explained, ranges from full-scale combat operations in places like Iraq and Afghanistan to flying combat air patrols over U.S. cities, providing security along international borders and at ports of entry, and safeguarding air bases in this country.

It reflects the National Guard's dual role as state forces commanded by the nation's governors and as a federal force when ordered to active duty by the president.

Blum's proposals focus on enhancing capabilities, adding to mission essential task lists for combat arms units, and task organizing. They include:

- Organizing chemical, biological and incident response task forces to include assets from the Guard's 32 full-time civil support teams, enhanced medical companies that can decontaminate and treat 150 people per hour, engineer companies with special search and rescue equipment, and combat units trained to support law enforcement agencies.
- Expanding the Guard's involvement in ground-based missile defense over and above the unit that is currently being formed to staff a facility that is expected to be operational in Alaska by Oct. 1, 2004.
- Creating quick and rapid Guard reaction forces that are immediately available to state and federal governments and that are trained for both combat and security duties. These new forces can be formed with personnel and resources that are already available to the Guard, Blum said. They will not require a lot of new, expensive, sophisticated equipment.

"This will require a new way of thinking," the Guard Bureau chief added. "Most real transformation happens right between your ears. It's not about hardware, and it's not about information technology. It's about how you think. And we need to change the way we think."

(Editor's note: Master Sgt. Bob Haskell is a member of the National Guard Bureau public affairs team.)

Library of Congress holds tribute for Bob Hope continued

admiration and best wishes given Dad by the American public. The celebration has become quite emotional. Our thanks to all these wonderful people is expressed through tears of joy."

Primarily a comedian, Bob Hope has acted, sang, danced, hosted his own radio and television shows and starred in 60 movies. "Bob Hope's dedication to and love for the American GI is legendary. He traveled around the world to entertain the men and women in uniform during World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and Desert Storm," states the inside jacket of the book entitled, "Bob Hope: My Life in Jokes," authored by Hope and his daughter, Linda.

SBCT certification about more than vehicle capabilities

by Joe Burlas

FORT POLK, La. (Army News Service, May 22, 2003) — While the Army's first Stryker Brigade Combat Team undergoes Initial Operational Capability testing at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, La., May 15-27, evaluators are examining more than just what the new armored vehicle can do, officials told visiting media May 21.

The IOC evaluation is the one of the last steps necessary for Fort Lewis, Washington's 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division to be declared fit to join the ranks of Army units ready to deploy across the globe whenever and wherever needed.

The unit will likely undergo a Full Operational Capability evaluation at a future date when it has all of its equipment, officials said. The brigade has a full complement of eight of the 10 Stryker armored vehicle types the SBCT table of organization and equipment calls for. The Mobile Gun System and Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Reconnaissance Strykers are still under development, with limited production currently scheduled for next year.

Until the 105-mm cannon equipped MGS Stryker can be fielded, SBCTs will use a Stryker Infantry Carrier modified to carry the Improved Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire-command-link guided missile. The MGS is not designed to be a tank killer, but rather a fortification/bunker buster.

"This (IOC evaluation) is Transformation for sure, but it is not just about that Stryker vehicle," said Lt. Gen. Edward Soriano, 1st Corps



Soldiers from 5/23rd Infantry demonstrate Stryker capabilities for the media at the Joint Training Readiness Center, Fort Polk, La., May 21. The Army's first Stryker Brigade Combat Team — 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Brigade — was undergoing an Initial Operational Capability evaluation May 15-27 as part of a process to be certified as deployable ready. (Photo by Joe Burlas)

and Fort Lewis commanding general — higher headquarters for 2nd ID. "It is about training today's junior leaders who will be the Army's future battalion, brigade and division or higher commanders; it's about transforming doctrine. It's about being the catalyst for the future as we travel the road to the Objective Force."

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New Web site online for Unit Manning

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, May 24, 2003) - The Unit Manning Task Force now has a dedicated Web site that can be accessed via PERSCOM On-line and AKO.

The new site at <https://www.unitmanning.army.mil> provides unit manning information in five broad categories: overview, research/history, current events, products, and discussion/feedback.

The Unit Manning Task Force was chartered by Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. John Keane on Oct. 18 to develop unit manning recommendations to reduce turbulence in the operational force, and enable unit commanders to build and sustain highly cohesive and well-trained teams.



The Army announced May 5 that it will use the 172nd Infantry Brigade (Separate) as the first unit to use unit manning personnel polices instead of the current personnel system of individual replacements. The 172nd, based at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, will use the Unit Manning Initiative as it becomes the third Army unit to transform into a Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

Under the Unit Manning Initiative, groups of soldiers will arrive together at a unit and train together day-to-day, through a standard 36-month tour, said Lt. Col. Paul Thornton, unit manning action

officer. He said under the current individual replacement system, soldiers leave and come into units on a monthly basis.

The current system requires constant retraining of individual and collective tasks to get new soldiers up to speed, Thornton said.

Unit manning will support Personnel Transformation, enable unit rotations, and provide cohesive Army units that will excel in the uncertain environment faced today, personnel officials said.

There are many misconceptions about unit manning, according to members of the task force. They said the Web site will help clarify the issues.

"Unit manning is not COHORT," explained Lt. Col. Dave Goehring, a program manager on the task force,

"this site will provide soldiers with the latest information on this Army initiative."

Task force members also encourage soldiers to check the Web site often and provide suggestions.

(Editor's note: Information provided by G1 and a previous ARNEWS article on unit manning by Joe Burlas, posted May 5.)

SBCT certification about more than vehicle capabilities continued

The results of the Fort Polk exercise, and those of an earlier 3rd Brigade exercise this month at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif., will be analyzed and collated into a formal report that must be certified by Gen. Larry Ellis, Army Forces Command commanding general. The IOC report then will be passed through the secretary of Defense to Congress. That report should be ready for Ellis by early June, said Brig. Gen. John Gardner, deputy commanding general for Transformation, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, and possibly sent to Congress by the end of the summer.

Gardner reported the NTC phase of the evaluation did reveal “some minor glitches and problems with (SBCT) equipment and procedures” and he expects some more of the same from the Fort Polk exercise. Those glitches and problems will be corrected through equipment modifications and unit training this summer. He said he is confident that the final IOC report will be overall favorable.

“The NTC phase of the exercise truly exceeded any expectations we had (of the SBCT) going in,” Gardner said.

And it has exceeded the expectations of Spc. Jack Shaffer, an infantryman and command Stryker driver in Company C, 5/20th Infantry, who moved to 2nd ID from an assignment with 172nd Infantry Brigade (Separate), Fort Wainwright, Alaska. A light unit, the 172nd uses High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle and a modified cargo snowmobile to traverse the terrain. The 172nd is slated to start transforming into a SBCT next year, with an IOC evaluation in May 2005.

Shaffer said he particularly liked how mobile the Stryker is — quicker than a HMMWV, quieter and able to move across terrain the HMMWV cannot handle.

He said he also liked the central air inflator system that allows tire pressure changes based upon the terrain from inside the vehicle. He said the system was also handy when his vehicle experienced a flat at NTC earlier this month.

“We had been going 10 days and were on our last mission when one of the center tires went flat,” Shaffer said. “The adjutor isolated that tire and kept the air flowing to it to keep it inflated. We continued the mission without any problem.”

The Army’s first Stryker brigade tested its strategic mobility in moving from NTC to JRTC — moving by air, rail, flat-bed trailer and sea. The air portion of the move included C-17 and C-141 aircraft to move about a battalion’s worth of Strykers. The sea part included roll-on, roll-off ships and High Speed Vessels.

“In a 26-year career, the movement was the most complex I have seen,” Gardner said. “It went extremely well.”

Lt. Col. Kevin Brown, JRTC chief of Operations, gave the reporters an update on how 2nd Brigade was doing in the exercise. He said the brigade controlled about twice the area a regular light infantry brigade has in the past four days after arriving. The brigade also had only one simulated fratricide compared to 12-14 friendly-fire incidents other brigades normally got after 270 contacts with the opposing force, Brown said.

Gardner said the difference in both cases reflected the SBCT increased situational awareness of the battlefield — the ability to see first, decide first and finish decisively through a number of assets often found only at division or corps level, if at all. It is also a case of the SBCT being able to quickly share information down to squad level through a networked digital system of systems — allowing mission planning on the move and with real-time data.

For Lt. Col. Rob Choppa, 5/23rd Infantry battalion commander, the ability of the Stryker to go where Bradley Infantry Vehicles, Abrams tanks and HMMWV cannot has saved friendly lives — if only simulated in the exercise.

“The OPFOR was amazed at our ability to go wherever we wanted,” Choppa said. “It allowed us to meet the enemy where we wanted to — not where he wanted to.”



Members of American Legion Post No. 5 lay a wreath as part of a Memorial Day ceremony Sunday at the Rhone American Cemetery in Draguignan, France. The remains of 861 Americans killed in World War II are buried at the cemetery 60 miles west of Nice. Photo by Scott Schonauer, Stars and Stripes.

Firefight in Iraq kills 4, injures 9 continued

But Martin said two vehicles approached the checkpoint together, and that men from the second opened fire and threw the grenade after U.S. troops found weapons in the first vehicle.

U.S. troops responded with fire from Bradley Fighting Vehicles, machine guns and small arms.

The attack came as Maj. Gen. Buford Blount III, the U.S. general in charge of troops in Baghdad, said that violence against U.S. forces appeared to be random incidents by irregulars loyal to Saddam and that overall security in Iraq's capital is improving.

Blount said most looting has ended and that joint U.S.-Iraqi police patrols have been arresting 40-50 people daily for more serious crimes.

"Every week we've had some kind of attack, whether it be a drive-by shooting or a (rocket-propelled grenade)," he said. "Yesterday it was a land mine. But it's very small groups, one or two people, in isolated attacks against our soldiers."

Blount said progress was also being made in normalizing electricity and water supplies to all of Baghdad, but that many of the difficulties in restoring utilities predate the war.

But Qaisar Wutwut, a senior official in the Iraqi National Congress that opposed Saddam, blamed officials of the former ruling Baath Party for the slowness of the U.S.-led administration in re-establishing law and order and restoring utilities and public services in Baghdad.

"Why is there still no electricity in Baghdad today?" asked Wutwut, noting that power generators in Baghdad and elsewhere were undamaged during the war. "It's because Baathists working with

the Americans are preventing the electricity from returning."

In Fallujah, the site of Tuesday's attack, U.S. forces have run into trouble before.

Protests against the Army's presence in the town - which was favored under the rule of Saddam Hussein - turned violent when U.S. soldiers fired on crowds on April 28 and April 30, killing 18 Iraqis and wounding at least 78.

On Tuesday, Fallujah residents said they were growing angry with the American presence.

"Every Iraqi is ready to sacrifice his life for resistance," said Safa al-Jubair, a 27-year-old street vendor. "We are 26 million Iraqis and we are all resisting and, God willing, occupation will end."

Separately, a U.S. soldier died Tuesday and two others were injured in a road accident near the town of Tallil, when their tractor-trailer collided with another vehicle. Another soldier drowned after diving into an aqueduct in northern Iraq, the Central Command said.

Recent days have been equally perilous for U.S. forces around Iraq.

A soldier was killed Monday and another wounded when their convoy was ambushed in northern Iraq. Another soldier died and three were wounded when their vehicle hit a land mine or a piece of unexploded ordnance in Baghdad, a military statement said Tuesday.

On Sunday, a U.S. soldier was killed and another injured in southern Iraq when a munitions dump exploded. The blast was not thought to be a result of hostile action, Central Command said.



U.S. soldiers arrive at the scene where an U.S. Army Humvee was destroyed in an apparent ambush on the road to Baghdad International Airport Monday, May 26, 2003. Details were unclear but witnesses said they heard several explosions and a 15-minute burst of gunfire, and four soldiers were reportedly injured in the incident. (AP Photo/Murad Sezer)

Leader takes over forces in Afghanistan

by Todd Pitman

BAGRAM, Afghanistan (AP) - A new American commander took control Tuesday of U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan, vowing the United States and its allies would remain committed to achieving stability in this war-ravaged country.

But with rebels and al-Qaida fighters still launching hit-and-run attacks on coalition troops, Afghan soldiers and aid workers, Maj. Gen. John R. Vines said maintaining security would not be easy.

"Some 25 years ago, as Afghanistan was wracked by war, the world looked the other way. Your presence here today reflects a commitment not to repeat that mistake," the 53-year-old Vines said after taking over Lt. Gen. Dan K. McNeill.

"We're here because our governments have committed to helping Afghanistan establish itself as a peaceful, prosperous nation. The job will not be easy."

The handover ceremony took place on a runway lined with helicopters at Bagram Air Base, the headquarters of 11,500 coalition troops, 8,500 of them American, deployed in the country.

Senior Afghan commanders attended the ceremony, as did Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah and diplomats including U.S. Ambassador Robert Finn.

U.S. military spokesman Col. Rodney Davis called Tuesday's change in leadership "routine." American commanders and soldiers in Afghanistan regularly serve tours-of-duty that don't exceed a year.

The hand-over coincides with a shift in combat ground forces. About 4,000 troops from the U.S. Army 10th Mountain Division, based at Fort Drum, N.Y., are replacing an equivalent number of soldiers from the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Division, based at Fort Bragg, N.C., Davis said.

Both divisions fall under the umbrella of the 18th Airborne Corps, which McNeill still heads. Vines is due to take over command of the 18th Airborne this summer, McNeill said.

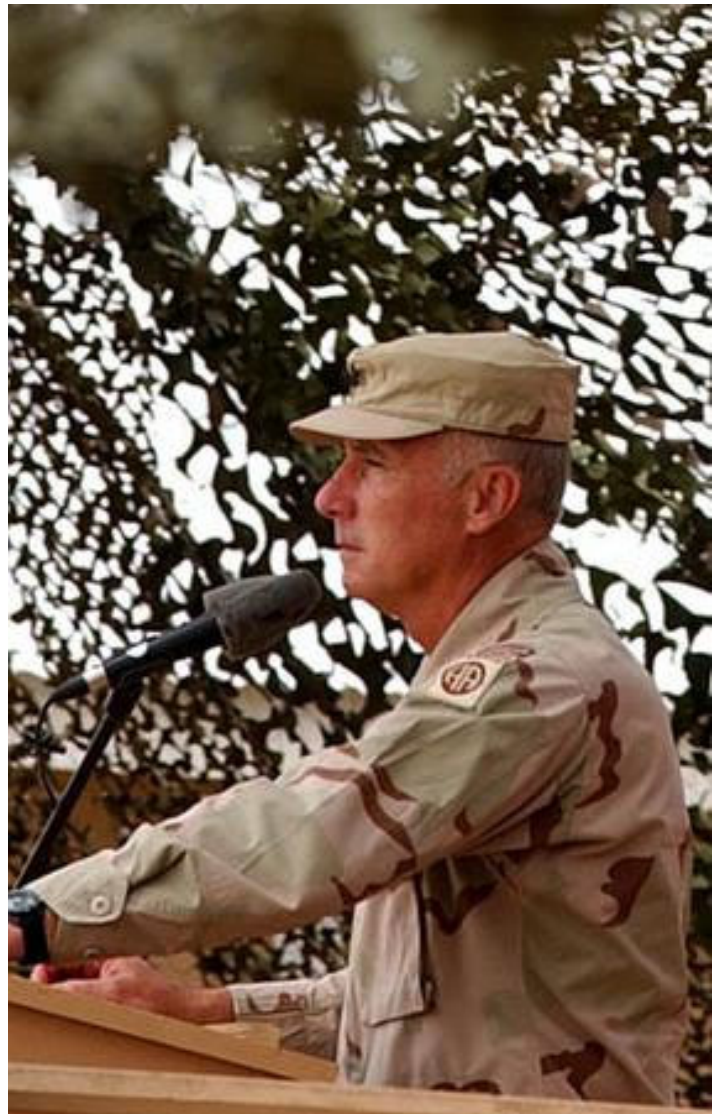
Vines has been in Afghanistan for nine months. As commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, he was responsible for tactical combat missions.

Coalition troops have been in Afghanistan since Afghan ground troops, aided by a massive U.S. bombing campaign, ousted the former Taliban government in late 2001.

Afghan authorities say the Taliban and their allies have been regrouping in recent months, stepping up attacks not only on coalition forces and Afghan government forces, but also on aid workers.

Despite that, Vines said the capacity of Taliban and al-Qaida fighters to launch attacks was diminishing.

"They have much less capability than they did a year ago," Vines



Maj. Gen. John R. Vines addresses Coalition Joint Task Force soldiers during a transfer of authority ceremony at Bagram Air Base, the headquarters of coalition forces in Afghanistan, Tuesday, May 27, 2003. Maj. Gen. Vines became the new commander of U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)

told The Associated Press in a brief interview after the ceremony. "Do they have the capability to inflict casualties on the government of Afghanistan, on its forces, on non-governmental organizations? Yes they do, in limited areas."

He said the reason aid workers had been attacked repeatedly in recent weeks was because they were "getting out more" - implementing humanitarian projects in new places as security countrywide increases.

"At any given point in time ... criminals can gain the upper hand and it can happen here," Vines said. "We will be aggressive in attempting

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U.S. Army Humvees try to make their way through a traffic jam in the Waziriya district of Baghdad, Iraq, Sunday, May 25, 2003. Traffic in Baghdad, notorious even before the war, has become a free-for-all since U.S. forces captured the capital early last month and police fled the dust-choked streets. (AP Photo/Ali Haider)

Leader takes over forces in Afghanistan continued

to deny them the opportunity to do that and when they do, we'll seek to capture or kill them."

Vines said coalition troop strength would remain the same for the foreseeable future and the overall nature operations would not change.

McNeill said coalition forces were starting to shift their focus toward humanitarian activities.

"You will see a slight change which has begun over the last few weeks in that (the coalition) begins to focus a little more on what we call stability operations," said McNeill, who is due to leave soon after spending a year in the country. "You'll see a greater emphasis on reconstruction."

McNeill said a slight reduction of coalition forces could occur in mid-2004, after the primary corps - about 9,000 men - of the U.S.- and French-trained Afghan army is formed.

U.S. officials hope the new army, which is expected to grow to 70,000 men, will eventually replace irregular Afghan militias who are loyal to powerful regional warlords.

Vines said Afghans would eventually have to take charge of their own security.

"We realize that ultimately this is an Afghan problem and it can only be solved by Afghans," Vines said. "The more rapidly we transition to that, the better off all of us will be."



A U.S. soldier arrives at the scene where a U.S. Army Humvee was destroyed in an apparent ambush on the road to Baghdad International Airport Monday, May 26, 2003. Details were unclear but witnesses said they heard several explosions and a 15-minute burst of gunfire, and four soldiers were reportedly injured in the incident. (AP Photo/Murad Sezer)



Carlos Mendez, a medic during the Vietnam War, plays the harmonica near the graves of thousands of veterans at the Los Angeles National Cemetery in the Westwood section of Los Angeles on Memorial Day, Monday, May 26, 2003. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)

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